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Synopses of Important Articles.

A HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

VI. By PROFESSOR W. M. RAMSAY, in the *Expositor*, November, 1898.¹

(28) "Covenant" in the New Testament. The term *διαθήκη* is used in the Septuagint as the equivalent of the Hebrew *berith*, although other words might have been used.

The word passed through a rapid course of development during the period of 300 B. C. to 100 A. D. First, it was a solemn and binding covenant guaranteed by the authority of a people and its gods. In the second place, the covenant was primarily an arrangement for the devolution of religious duties and rights, not merely a bequeathing of money and property. In the third place, the maker of a covenant had full power in his hands, and the party benefited by it had no authority in making it. In the fourth place, while the noun *διαθήκη* is confined almost exclusively to the disposition of one's property or one's duty by will, the verb is used also in the sense to dispose of one's property by sale. Fifth, the central idea expressed in the word represented fairly one important side of the biblical conception, namely the absolute authority of the disposer of property or duties, who in biblical covenant is God. The owner could even disinherit his son, but he must do it publicly and for good reasons. He could further affect the disposition of his property throughout generations. By degrees the character of the Greek "testament" tended to change, as appears from the evidence gained from the Græco-Syrian Law-Book of the fifth century after Christ. The use of the term in the New Testament is affected by this change. But in the Galatian church the testament was likely to be regarded by Paul as an irrevocable document, and not the Roman will.

(29) The argument in Galatians 3:16. Paul seems to have been tempted to arrive at a religious truth by a verbal argument. The term seed is used in the singular, for the single great descendant of Abraham. The main argument that the promises were made to Abraham, and so are the heritage of the whole church of Christ, is true and

¹ See the *BIBLICAL WORLD*, July, 1898, pp. 54-5; August, pp. 117-19; September, pp. 204-6; October, pp. 278-80; November, pp. 349-50.

lasting, though reached by a process of reasoning which has no more force in logic than the poorest word-splitting of any old Greek philosopher or Hebrew rabbi.

(30) Galatians 3:19-22. In this passage Paul guards against a possible misinterpretation of his words which might be dangerous. It might be said that he was representing the law as being in opposition to the promises made to Abraham and his seed. He therefore defines what he conceives to be the function of the law.

(31) The mediator. The precise meaning of the argument in 3:20 is very difficult to catch. The probability is that Paul sees the right result, but attains it by an argument founded upon the generally accepted view of the period that grammatical forms have a deep philosophical meaning. The law did not come immediately and directly from God to man, but through angels and a mediator, that is Moses. Such a method of transmission is less gracious than from God to Abraham. Paul is probably thinking, as in Rom. 3:30, of God's being one in all his acts, both promise and law. Here Paul aims at a great truth, but reaches it by a mistaken argument.

The chief value of the present paper of Professor Ramsay lies in that portion which it is very difficult to synoptize—the history of the term *διαθήκη*. Indeed, as his historical commentary proceeds it appears that this element is the one of chief importance. One cannot help feeling that he has to a considerable degree made out his archæological case, and that in the use of the term we have an illustration of Greek rather than Roman law. If so, exegesis has gained. His characterization of Paul's rabbinical arguments seems just.

S. M.

HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY—A CONTRAST. By REV. JOHN R. JONES, in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October, 1898, pp. 591-628.

(1) Hinduism differs from Christianity in its initial conceptions. Religion to it is the aspiration after God. This God is, however, the inscrutable, passionless, immovable being who, without a second, stands as the source and embodiment of all true being. He is the only real existence, all else is illusion. Though this idea is the unpromising enemy of materialism, yet the deity is a nonentity to the worshiper. Hence the system has led to polytheism. The thirty-three million gods are none of them supreme, and therefore cannot satisfy the craving of the soul. The universe is eternal, whatever may be its origin. Man has no reality. He, too, is mere illusion. If his

destiny be to return to the eternal soul, the result is merely to reduce this present life to an irremediable evil, with no spiritual value.

(2) It differs from Christianity in its ultimate aim or goal. Human endowments, qualities, activity, and desires must be suppressed, that the soul unhampered may reach a consummation which is absorption in the divine. Human life is an evil, since it impedes this union, yet sin is impossible, since there can be no antagonism where all reality is divine. What is called sin is ignorance of self, and the ideal is not moral character.

(3) It differs from Christianity in the agencies and means employed. Man is alone in his struggle. His emancipation is in his own hands, through his own works. Sacrifice is for the purpose of nourishing the gods, or a means of acquiring power over them. This salvation of self is achieved through Yoga, which is austerity embodied in asceticism and self-mortification, the concentration of mind which enables one to see clearly the divine. This divine being comes to man in the form of incarnations, which, however, cannot ultimately affect the power of Karma. They are, indeed, the results of the divine Karma. Faith in these incarnations is itself a meritorious act. It is not the person in whom faith is exercised, but the faith itself, that will save.

(4) It differs from Christianity in its processes. The process of salvation is through metempsychosis. All acts, words, and thoughts find their exact reward in future births. The doctrine is based upon the hypothetical identity of souls in different successive bodies, yet there is no reasonable ground for holding that by this transmigration salvation can be achieved.

(5) It differs from Christianity in its ideals. It has no supreme example like that of Buddha, Mohammed, or Christ. Its ideal is an elaborate ceremonial entering into all the details of life.

(6) It differs from Christianity in its credentials. While its scriptures claim inspiration and divine character, internal evidences indicate the human origin, even of the Vedas and Upanishads. Later writings are morally depraved. The whole body of scriptures is overwhelmingly voluminous. The course of revelation is from the higher to the lower. The earlier scriptures are the best.

(7) Other traits distinguish Hinduism from Christianity, such as its attitude toward the individual and society. It is the staunchest foe to individual freedom. It glorifies the caste system. It conserves and deifies the past. It is tolerant to the verge of dissolution. It is a

purely ethnic faith, not going legitimately outside of India. Its root is in ceremony and ritual, not in belief.

(8) It differs from Christianity in its results and its outlook. The types of character produced are the mystical. Quiescence and self-discipline are the supreme virtues. The positive energizing ethical traits are weak. Caste destroys the solidarity of society. Woman is degraded. Hence Hinduism is in a state of dissolution, since it cannot meet the demands of progressive civilization and high spiritual aspiration.

Hindu philosophy, keen and deep as it is, is not a substitute for religion, and Hindu religion must yield to Christianity; but it will be a Christianity which will take its coloring from the East, and differ in many of its aspects and points of emphasis from the western article. That missionary will succeed best who appreciates and acts upon this principle.

This article is by one of the most thorough and successful of India's missionaries from America. It is candid, thorough, courageous, clear, truthful, generous. It may well surprise the reader, who does not know by acquaintance with the facts of universal religion, that a system which is so fatally weak can stand against the purer and more vigorous Christian faith. But the author makes it perfectly clear that a religion entrenched in social custom and imbedded in social thought and life requires for its uprooting the renewal of social conditions, as well as the regeneration of the individual. The bearing of this thought upon the methods of missionary activity and upon the length of time required for the overthrow of such a system is significant.

G. S. G.

THE APOCALYPSE AND RECENT CRITICISM.—After reviewing and classifying New Testament apocalyptic criticism from that of Weizsäcker in 1882 to that of the present time, the following conclusions are reached: (1) that there is in the material of the Apocalypse a Babylonian element; (2) there are elements of undoubted Jewish origin; (3) the Apocalypse is of a documentary character; (4) it reached its final form about the end of the first century.

Provisionally the analysis of Professor Briggs is accepted, as are also his dates and assertions regarding the different strata of the compilation. The important unsolved problems are: (1) John's relation to the Apocalypse; (2) the extent of the successive editions and the order of compilation.—G. A. BARTON, *American Journal of Theology*, October, 1898,